

# The Dependent Origination - The Law of Cause & Effect (*Paticcasamuppāda*)

Buddhism always points out the path to overcome suffering and achieve the final liberation. The Buddha's main purpose was explaining the path that leads to cessation of suffering. If someone understands the suffering, he realizes the origin of suffering. If someone realizes the origin of suffering, he understands the cessation of suffering. If someone understands the cessation of suffering, he goes forward on the path that leads to get rid of suffering. When one of those truths is realized by a wise person, other steps are also understood (*Gavampati Sutta*). This is the nature of the understanding of the four noble truths. The dependent origination is the process of the arising and ceasing of suffering and the world as well.

Understanding the dependent origination is the turning point and the unique in Buddhism. The dependent origination is like the heart of Buddhism. He who understands the dependent origination understands himself and the world. Also, understanding the dependent origination leads to understand the Supreme Buddha. Hence understanding the four noble truths, the dependent origination and the Buddha are interrelated. That's why the Buddha says;

He who sees the dependent origination sees the Dhamma.

He who sees the Dhamma sees the dependent origination.

(*Yo paticcasamuppādaṃ passati, so dhammaṃ passasati,*

*Yo dhammaṃ passati so paticcasamuppādaṃ passati*)

He who sees the dhamma sees (me) the Buddha. He who sees (me) the Buddha sees the Dhamma.

(*Yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati*)

Above four things, the fourfold noble truth (*Cattāri ariyasaccāni*) is based on understanding of the dependent origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*). Understanding the dependent origination is like understanding the heart of Buddhism. On the other hand, understanding the four noble truths depends on understanding ignorance. In short, the meaning of ignorance is the lack of understanding of the cause and effect of suffering. When we experience something through our senses like eye, ear, that experience doesn't come to the present from the past, also that experience doesn't go to future from the present. This is the ultimate truth which happens in our experiential world whether we like it or not. Unfortunately, because of lack of comprehension people think that before we experience something, it happened. And also, after we experienced, the experience remains. This is the way that the world thinks. This is the ignorance that we have to overcome as much as we are knowledgeable about what the Buddha explained.

Early morning on the Vesak Full moon day, the Buddha got enlightened in Bodh Gaya. The supreme Buddha by his wisdom realized and reflected on cause and effect of suffering that

the world suffers with decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. At that moment he realized reasons of suffering one by one orderly. There he understood the closest reason for decay (*Jarā*), death (*Marāṇa*), sorrow (*Soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*Dukkha*), grief (*Domanassa*) and despair (*Upāyāsa*) as birth (*Jāti*). Then he analyzed why birth happens. Here he saw the reason for birth as the process of becoming (or existence=*Bhava*). The Buddha again investigated the reason for the process of becoming. He understood the reason for becoming as clinging (*Upādāna*). Next, he considered the reason for clinging as craving (*Taṇhā*). After that he realized the reason for craving as sensation (or feeling=*Vedanā*). When he reflected on the cause of feeling, he understood the reason for feeling as contact (or impression = *Phassa*). Then he recognized six senses (*Salāyatana*) as the cause of contact. Again, while he was investigating the reason for six senses, he knew mind and matter (Mentality and corporeality = *Nama Rupa*). When he analyzed the cause of mind and matter, he understood consciousness (*Viññāṇa*). After that he examined the reason for consciousness as volitional actions (*Samkhāra*). Finally, he clearly explored that volitional actions arise because of ignorance (*Avijjā*). When we are ignorant of volitional actions other causes of suffering arise like decay, death etc. According to this discovery, the Buddha understood the process of our entire life cycle in the Sansāric Journey. Here we can classify all of them in an order like this;

Through ignorance are conditioned volitional actions (kamma-formations)  
(*Avijjā paccayā samkhārā*).

Through volitional actions is conditioned consciousness  
(*Samkhāra paccayā viññāṇam*).

Through consciousness are conditioned mental and physical phenomena (mentality & corporeality)  
(*Viññāṇa paccayā nāmarupam*).

Through mental and physical phenomena are conditioned the six faculties (i.e., five physical sense-organs and mind)  
(*Nāmarupa paccayā salāyatanaṃ*)

Through the six faculties is conditioned (sensorial and mental) contact.  
(*Salāyatanapaccayā phasso*)

Through (sensorial and mental) contact is conditioned sensation.  
(*Phassa paccayā vedanā*)

Through sensation is conditioned craving. (*Vedanā paccayā taṇhā*)

Through craving ('thirst') is conditioned clinging. (*Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ*)

Through clinging is conditioned the process of becoming. (*Upādāna paccayā bhavo*)

Through the process of becoming is conditioned rebirth. (*Bhava paccayā jāti*)

Through rebirth are conditioned decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair  
(*Jāti paccayā jarā marāṇa soka parideva dukkha domanassa upāyasā*)

This discovery can be seen only in a dispensation of a Buddha. It can't be seen in any other religion or philosophy. Buddhism has explained this process using several terms like;

- Ariya ñāya* – The theory of the Buddha  
*Paticcasamuppāda* – The dependent origination  
*Hetuphala Dhamma* – The law of cause and effect  
*Idappaccayatū* – The process of cause and effect

The Dependent Origination Buddhism (*Paticcasamuppāda*) mostly explains the arising and ceasing of suffering focusing on one thought in the present moment. When someone is ignorant, all the facts (steps) of the dependent origination immediately arise until decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. However, when we acknowledge some references in Buddhism such as *Mahānidāna Sutta*, *Patisambhidāmagga* ect., we can see its explanation as times like past, present and future.

<b>Past</b>	1. Ignorance – <i>Avijjā</i> 2. Volitional formations - <i>Samkhāra</i>	Karma – Formation ( <i>Kamma Bhava</i> )
<b>Present</b>	3. Consciousness – <i>Viññāṇa</i> 4. Mentality and Corporeality - <i>Nāma-rupa</i> (Mind & Matter) 5. Six Senses - <i>Salāyatana</i> 6. Contact - <i>Phassa</i> 7. Feeling - <i>Vedanā</i>	Rebirth Process ( <i>Upapatti Bhava</i> )
	8. Craving - <i>Taṇhā</i> 9. Clinging – <i>Upādāna</i> 10. Existence of becoming - <i>Bhava</i>	Karma Process ( <i>Kamma – Bhava</i> )
<b>Future</b>	11. Rebirth - <i>Jāti</i> 12. Decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair - <i>Jāti nirodhā jarā maraṇa soka parideva dukka domanassa upāyāsā</i>	Rebirth – Process ( <i>Upapatti Bhava</i> )

Main deference in Buddhism, when compared with other religions and philosophies, is the theory of cause and effect. All other religions, philosophies and sciences explain their teachings and theories depending on conventional truth. According to the conventional truth, before we experience there was a world and also after our experience the world remains. According to the dependent origination in Buddhism where the ultimate truth is explained, before we experience there was no world and also after our experience the world doesn't remain. The experience or the world arises and ceases as the result of conditions coming together and separating.

When our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact with external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, mental formations, the experience arises at the moment. Simultaneously, five aggregates (form, feelings, perception, mental formation and consciousness)

arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is it wasn't here before the experience. And also, it doesn't remain after the experience. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering. The Buddha has explained this theory in various ways in his teachings like this;

When this is, that is (*Asmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti*)

With the arising of this - this arises (*Imassa Uppādā idaṃ uppajjati*)

When this not being, this doesn't come to be (*Asmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti*)

With the cessation of this - this ceases (*Imassa nirodha idaṃ nirujjhati*)

Eye is impermanent (*Cakkhuṃ aniccaṃ*)

Forms are impermanent (*Rupaṃ aniccaṃ*)

Eye consciousness is impermanent (*Chakkhu Viññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ*)

Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

(*yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*”ti)

Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence (*ahutvā sambhutaṃ hutvā na bhavissati*).

Madhupiṇḍika Sutta in Majjhima Nikaya explains how the world arises and ceases.

### **The arising of the world**

If someone contacts the world by six senses with ignorance, suffering follows him. The discourse explains it thus; **“Eye consciousness arises dependent on the eye and sights. The meeting of the three is contact. Contact is a condition for feeling. What you feel, you perceive. What you perceive, you think about. What you think about, you proliferate. What you proliferate about is the source from which a person is beset by concepts of identity that emerge from the proliferation of perceptions. This occurs with respect to sights known by the eye in the past, future, and present.”**

When there is the ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind, thoughts, and mind consciousness, it's possible to point out what's known as 'contact'. ... When there is what's known as thought, it's possible to point out what's known as 'being beset by concepts of identity that emerge from the proliferation of perceptions.

When someone is ignorant at the moment, everything we contact is ignorant with suffering. As the amount of ignorance, we have to suffer.

### The cessation of the world

If someone contacts the world by six senses without ignorance (with wisdom), he can overcome suffering. **“When there is no eye, no sights, and no eye consciousness, it’s not possible to point out what’s known as ‘contact’. When there isn’t what’s known as contact, it’s not possible to point out what’s known as ‘feeling’. When there isn’t what’s known as feeling, it’s not possible to point out what’s known as ‘perception’. When there isn’t what’s known as perception, it’s not possible to point out what’s known as ‘thought’. When there isn’t what’s known as thought, it’s not possible to point out what’s known as ‘being beset by concepts of identity that emerge from the proliferation of perceptions.’”**

When there is no ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind, no thoughts, and no mind consciousness, it’s not possible to point out what’s known as ‘contact’. ... When there isn’t what’s known as thought, it’s not possible to point out what’s known as ‘being beset by concepts of identity that emerge from the proliferation of perceptions.

Understanding of Buddhism equals how far we have understood this theory, the dependent origination. If someone has a clear knowledge, he is knowledgeable about suffering. Understanding of suffering causes to the understanding of the four noble truths. If someone knows suffering as lack of knowledge of this theory, listening to what the Buddha taught he tries to understand the dependent origination, five aggregates and four noble truths as much as he can. And also, he always tries to practice the path to get rid of suffering. Here he has to practice three disciplines. They are;

1. Virtue                      (*Sīla*)
2. Tranquility                (*Samādhi*)
3. Wisdom                     (*Paññā*)

First of all, he disciplines his physical and verbal actions with the knowledge of the dependent origination. Having a good discipline in speech and behavior, he gradually trains his mind in tranquility by practicing concentration meditation. Because of his clear knowledge about the process of how suffering arises with a concentrated mind he reflects on impermanence. Here he always reflects on the arising and ceasing of the five aggregates. As much as he can examine, his ignorance gradually decreases. Simultaneously, arising of other parts of dependent origination of his life also decreases. As the result of practicing this path suffering gradually decreases. He always tries to live with virtue and concentration seeing insight as impermanence. Also, he is aware of the present moment. This is the way how ignorance ceases and other things decrease with ignorance gradually;

With the fading away and cessation of ignorance comes cessation of volitional formations.  
(*Avijjāyatveva asesavirāga nirodhā saṃkhāra nirodho*)

With the cessation of volitional formations comes cessation of consciousness  
(*Saṃkhāra nirodhā viññāṇa nirodho*)

With the cessation of consciousness comes cessation of mentality and corporeality (Mind & Matter)  
(*Viññāṇa nirodhā nāmarupa nirodho*)

With the cessation of mind and matter comes cessation of six senses  
(*Nāmarupa nirodhā salāyatana nirodho*)

With the cessation of six senses comes cessation of contact  
(*Salāyatana Nirodhā phassa nirodho*)

With the cessation of contact comes cessation of feeling  
(*Phassa nirodhā vedanā nirodho*)

With the cessation of feeling comes cessation of craving  
(*Vedanā nirodhā taṇhā nirodho*)

With the cessation of craving comes cessation of clinging  
(*Taṇhā nirodhā upādāna nirodho*)

With the cessation of clinging comes cessation of existence of becoming  
(*Upādāna nirodhā bhava nirodho*)

With the cessation of existence comes cessation of rebirth (*Bhava nirodhā jāti nirodho*)

With the cessation of rebirth, cessation of decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair comes (*Jāti nirodhā jarā maraṇa soka parideva dukka domanassa upāyāsā*)

This is the way that the Buddha pointed out to get rid of suffering and achieve the final bliss of liberation. For this result we should dedicate all our things like time, wealth, effort in this time when the Buddha's dispensation has appeared in the world. Actually, we were born in this world in this time to attain liberation. Therefore, we have to attempt as much as we can. Practicing the path of deliverance (*Mokkha Magga*) is the most beneficial thing that we receive throughout our life as wise people.



**May the Triple Gem Bless you!**

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